

2. Claims 22-25 have been rejected on page 5, paragraph 6, even though claim 22 amended in the previous response includes the subject matter of claim 28 which, as stated above, does not appear to have its allowability withdrawn.
3. To add to the above confusion, claims 7, 11-21 and 22-27 and 29 have been indicated as "allowed" on page 7, paragraph 7.

Applicant is unable to fathom whether claims 22-25 are allowed or rejected because the office action has mutually contradictory indications (see above) and whether the previous allowance of claim 28 is withdrawn or not.

Applicant respectfully requests expedited prosecution of this case. This application was filed September 16, 1999, based on a Provisional application filed September 18, 1998. This case has now been pending for about 4½ years without final resolution. For the record, Applicant has received the following office actions and prosecution continues, with the references of record, without further resolution:

- (a) A first office action, paper # 3, mailed August 15, 2001, in which the Examiner indicated claims 14, 26, and 27 to be allowable and rejected the other claims.
- (b) A second office action, paper # 6, mailed November 13, 2002, in which claims 11-21 were allowed, and claims 5-7, 10, and 23-29 were indicated to be allowable.
- (c) A third office action, paper # 8, mailed May 8, 2003,

in which claims 11-21 were allowed and claims 5, 7, 26-29 were indicated to be allowable. Applicant responded to this action by adding the subject matter of allowable claims 5 and 28 into claims 1 and 22, respectively, to place the case in condition for allowance.

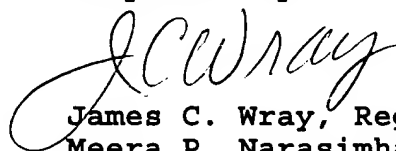
- (d) A fourth (latest) office action, paper # 10, mailed November 10, 2003, in which claims 7, 11-21, 22-27, and 29 are indicated as allowed, while the other claims, as well as claims 22-25 are rejected.

Applicant respectfully requests clarification from the Examiner as to the exact issues that Applicant must address so that there is no confusion as to the allowed, allowable and rejected claims. Applicant reserves the right to address all the remaining issues in the office action after such clarification.

Applicant has presented a novel, unique and non-obvious invention. Reconsideration, clarification, and allowance are respectfully requested.

Re-issue of a new non-final office action clarifying the above is respectfully requested.

Respectfully,



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